

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 071728Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5465

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: DISSIDENT MINISTERS PROMISE TO CONFORM

REF: (A) LONDON 14302; (B) LONDON 14495

1. NOVEMBER 7 PRESS REPORTS THAT THREE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS (ANTHONY BENN, JUDITH HART AND JOAN LESTOR) WHO LAST WEEK WERE REBUKED BY PRIME MINISTER WILSON FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF LABOR PARTY'S NEC RESOLUTION "DEPLORING" JOINT UK/SOUTH AFRICAN NAVAL EXERCISES (REF A), HAVE WRITTEN
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LETTERS PROMISING NOT TO TAKE PUBLIC POSITIONS AT VARI-

ANCE WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY. ACCORDING TO PRESS, THEIR INITIAL LETTERS TO WILSON WERE REJECTED AS EQUIVOCAL, BUT THEIR SECOND RESPONSES WERE ACCEPTED AND WILSON NOW CONSIDERS MATTER CLOSED.

2. TWO MINISTERS (UNIDENTIFIED) REPORTEDLY GAVE UNQUALIFIED ASSURANCES THAT THEY WOULD ABIDE BY COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY DOCTRINE, EVEN WITHIN PARTY ORGANS SUCH AS NEC, WHILE THE THIRD PROMISED TO RESIGN IN EVENT SUCH A CONFLICT AROSE IN FUTURE.

3. COMMENT: WILSON HAS CLEARLY WON THE FIRST ROUND ON THE COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY ISSUE, BUT IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO SURFACE AGAIN AT ANNUAL LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE WHERE PARTY'S LEFT-WING IS EXPECTED TO ASSERT SUPREMACY OF CONFERENCE AND NEC IN MATTERS OF POLICY (REF B). AS YET EMBASSY HAS NO READING AS TO IDENTITY OF MINISTER WHO TOOK RESIGNATION POSITION IN THE RESPONSE. PRESS SPECULATES THAT WILSON WAS DETERMINED TO FORCE SHOWDOWN ON COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY IN EC, AND EMBASSY AGREES. PRESS ALSO SPECULATES THAT WILSON WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY UNHAPPY TO HAVE FORCED BENN OUT OF CABINET ON THIS ISSUE. EMBASSY, HOWEVER, IS SKEPTICAL OF THIS THESIS, AS SUCH DEVELOPMENT WOULD HAVE INTENSIFIED LEFT-WING DISCONTENT IMMEDIATELY BEFORE ANNUAL CONVENTION WHICH ALREADY PROMISES TO FEATURE HEATED BATTLE BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT.

SOHM

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